of Technology (IITs) are autonomous institutions and recruitment of faculty is done by them as per their respective Statutes and not by the Government. Recruitment of faculty is a continuous process and all out efforts are made by the institutes to fill up the vacant posts. IITs have been employing suitable strategies to attract and retain quality faculty which include providing of good residential accommodation, good medical facilities, initial research grants, financial support for participation in national/international conferences, suitable scheme for sharing of consultancy charges, etc.

(d) and (e) For the new IITs, the recurring and non-recurring costs, which include financial support for salary, perks and other facilities to faculty, will be borne by the Central Government.

Out of school children

2169 SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether, even after 59 years of independence, there are still one crore out-of-school children;

(b) whether more than Rs. 11,000 crore have been collected through two per cent education cess during the last two years and if so, the manner in which the same have been consumed;

(c) whether the quality of education imparted in Government schools is poor; and

(d) the measures taken to reduce the number of out-of-school children and for ensuring gender equality and quality education?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has made considerable progress in enhancing access to elementary education. From 4.4 crore children who were out of school in 2001, the number of out of school children has now come down to 75.97 lakhs as on March, 2007.

(b) Education Cess @ 2% on major Central Taxes was levied through Finance (No.2) Act, 2004. As per information received from Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue, the following amount of Education Cess has been collected in respect of Direct and Indirect Taxes during the last two years:

(Rs. in crore)

Year	Total
2005-06	7714.07
2006-07	8667.00 *

* Figure are provisional

The proceeds of Education Cess, credited into Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK) are utilized exclusively for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme.

(c) and (d) Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, several activities have been undertaken to improve the quality of elementary education, *inter alia*, recruitment of about 7.9 lakh additional teachers to improve the pupil teacher ratio, in-service training of teachers for a period of 20 days each year free distribution of textbooks for primary and upper primary classes to about 6.3 crore SC, ST and girls students, regular academic support to primary and upper primary schools through 6700 Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and 66000 Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) and regular evaluation of students and monitoring of school performance.

Context specific interventions for children who are "hard to reach" such as bridge courses, learning centres with flexible timings, seasonal hostels, home based education, mobile schools, have been taken up under SSA. The Government of India has undertaken 17 orientation and capacity building workshops with States/ UTs with illustrative case studies of good practices, to encourage State/districts to do such context specific interventions.

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), funds are provided for promoting girls education, including free textbooks to all girl children up to elementary level, girls toilets and two focused interventions namely, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV) residential upper primary schools in educationally backward blocks.

National Commission for Higher Education

†2170. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a need for a National Commission for Higher Education, for higher education in the country;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government have approached the major educational organisations in the country in this matter; and

(d) if so, the names of such organisations and the viewpoints expressed by them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) A proposal to set up a 'National Commission on Higher Education' is under consideration in the light of the observations of various concerned stake-holders.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.